

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 SINGAP 00600 111104Z  
ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03  
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01  
/056 W  
-----11114Z 006427 /22

R 110928Z FEB 77  
FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7113  
INFO AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SINGAPORE 600

E.O. 11652: N/A  
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, SN  
SUBJECT: PRESIDENT SHEARES OPENS FIRST SESSION OF FOURTH PARLIAMENT

REF: 76 SINGAPORE 5779

1. PRESIDENT SHEARES OPENED THE FOURTH PARLIAMENT ON FEBRUARY 8 WITH A SHORT TELEVISED SPEECH THAT ENCAPSULATED SEVERAL WELL-KNOWN PAP THEMES AND MADE A STRONG PITCH FOR CONSTRUCTIVE BACKBENCH CRITICISM OF GOVERNMENTAL POLICIES. CONTRASTING PREVAILING SITUATION TO THAT WHICH EXISTED AT CONVENING IN 1972 OF PREVIOUS PARLIAMENT (PRIOR TO OIL PRICE INCREASES, WORLD RECESSION AND FALL OF INDOCHINA), SHEARES NOTED SINGAPORE'S DIMINISHED SECURITY AND ECONOMIC PROSPECTS. HE ALSO MADE REFERENCE TO THE CONTINUED THREAT OF COMMUNIST SUBVERSION, THE GOS REJECTION OF VARIOUS SOCIAL WELFARE PROGRAMS AS UNECONOMICAL, AND THE NEED TO SAFEGUARD SINGAPOREAN CULTURE FROM DESTRUCTIVE WESTERN INFLUENCES. SHEARES STRONGLY NOTED THE ESSENTIAL NATURE OF THE GOS DETENTION OF FULL TEXT BEING POUCED TO DEPARTMENT. COMMUNIST ELEMENTS.

2. SHEARES' CALL TO "ENSURE THAT ALL SHADES OF OPINION OUT IN THE CONSTITUENCIES ARE VIGOROUSLY VOICED IN

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PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS AND DEBATES" WAS STRONGLY SUPPORTED IN STRAITS TIMES (ST) FEBRUARY 9 EDITORIAL.  
" THE INTENTION TO ALLOW FREER DEBATE...HAS AGAIN BEEN EMPHASIZED...AND IT IS TO BE HOPED THAT THE PARLIAMENT... WILL TAKE SERIOUSLY THE CALL TO RELAMT THE MOOD OF THE

CONSTITUENCIES."

3. COMMENT. SHEARES' CALL ECHOED SIMILAR APPEALS MADE BY PAP CHAIRMAN TOH CHIN CHYE (REFTEL) AND HOUSE LEADER BARKER ON FEBRUARY 7, AND INDICATES THAT THE PAP LEADERSHIP HAS AGREED IN PRINCIPLE TO UNLEASH BACKBENCH MPS IN ORDER TO ENCOURAGE "CONSTRUCTIVE" DISSENT. IF FULFILLED, SHEARES' HOPES THAT "NO MAJOR POLICY OR LEGISLATION SHOULD BE PASSED WITHOUT THE CLOSED (SIC) SCRUTINY", WOULD PREPRESENT A CHANGE IN THE PREVIOUS TENDENCY OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE TO MAKE MAJOR POLICY DECISIONS WITHOUT PARLIAMENTARY DISCUSSION. HOWEVER, IT IS BY NO MEANS CERTAIN HOW FAR LEE KUAN YEW WILL ALLOW DISSENT AND DEBATE ON IMPORTANT ISSUES TO RANGE.

HOLDRIDGE

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptoning:** X  
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**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
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**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 22 May 2009  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
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**Enclosure:** n/a  
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**Review Markings:**  
Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
22 May 2009  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009